ABSTRACT

Information collections defining a common subject such as a codified or uncodified body of law are stored on a computer readable medium in association with temporal information indicating the state or status with respect to time of parts of the information collection, including different versions of the same part. Parts that are different versions of each other have different temporal information associated therewith and can be accessed based on the temporal information. Thus, the temporal information may be used to control access to and display of parts of the subject in a computer system based on time as a search or request parameter. Parts of the common subject may be organized and stored according to various schemes, including hierarchical schemes such as topic trees, a relational database, a file system or a structured document system (e.g., using XML). Parts of the common subject and temporal and other information may be associated in various ways, including linking (e.g., hyperlinking), with pointers, or by including them in the same file, record or document. A hierarchical arrangement of hyperlinked, structured documents collectively provide a table of contents (TOC) to the subject. In the preferred embodiment, the subject is a statutory body of law such as the United States Code. Sections of the Code are stored in associated with temporal information such as date of enactment, effective date and termination date. A researcher can then access the version of the code in effect at any particular time. For example, historical and current versions of a section of the United States Code can be viewed, as accessed hierarchically or directly by identification of the section and a date. Other information, stored in association with a part of a body of law may include historical information, commentary, annotations, descriptive information, legislative history, references, and/or links to laws, judicial decisions and other information.